SCIENCE

FRIDAY, APRIL 29, 1910

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BOTANICAL GARDENS[1]

RELATIONS OF BOTANICAL GARDENS TO THE PUBLIC

BOTANICAL gardens are important factors in public education, and are, at the same time, places for public recreation and enjoyment. They are highly specialized parks in which the plantations are formed and arranged primarily with regard to botanical facts and theories. Inasmuch as the great majority of their visitors have little time to spend, the information they carry away is more generally by impressions than by closer observation, although individual plants and groups of plants will often be remembered by casual visitors for long periods of time. Botanical gardens are, therefore, in effect museums of living plants, and the plants, treated as museum objects, suitably labeled, are installed to illustrate not only the objects themselves, but their relation to other objects. This museum feature is then a direct and immediate function in imparting information to the public.

The grouping of plants in botanical gardens is susceptible of widely different treatments, depending upon the character and the area of land available, the expense involved, and the facts and theories selected for illustration; also in the temperate zones, at least, upon the amount of greenhouse space available; also on the relative importance given to landscape considerations and upon the areas retained as natural forest, thicket or meadow. Facts and theories

[1] A symposium given before Section G, American Association for the Advancement of Science, at the Boston meeting, Tuesday, December 28, 1909.